

Nixon Feigns Ignorance

April 28, 1973

John Ehrlichman: No. It's a cable.

President Nixon: But a fake letter?

JE: Yeah.

RMN: From John F. Kennedy?

JE: Well, that is what it is alleged to be.

RMN: Oh, my God. I just can't believe that. I just can't believe that. The whole-you remember, you were conducting for me, you and Young, were conducting a whole study of the whole Diem thing and the Bay of Pigs thing.

JE: That's right. That's correct.

RMN: But, John, you will-if my recollection is correct, I just said get the facts.... I should have been told about that, shouldn't I?

JE: Well, I'm not so sure but what you weren't.

RMN: By whom?

JE: I don't know. I don't know...

JE: ... Well, I'd have to go back and check my notes. But my recollection is that this was discussed with you...

RMN: If I'm in that kind of position, it's a position I just didn't know about, believe me. I have, throughout this thing. I must say, I have not known, I didn't know about the Watergate and I didn't know about the other thing. But I knew that we were checking all this. But my God, I didn't know they were faking stuff involving that on Kennedy....

Kissinger Consoles Nixon

April 28, 1973

Henry Kissinger: Hello, Mr. President.

President Nixon: Hi, Henry. How are you?

HK: Okay. I didn't have, really have anything. I just wanted to call you to tell you I was thinking

of-

RMN: Oh, sure. Well, that's fine, Henry. Now you get on with your business, and I'll work. Don't you worry.

HK: I have no question about it.

RMN: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Got some awfully tough calls to make, but I'll make them.

HK: Well, it's a painful one, but I know it's going to come out for the best.

RMN: [Laughs] Well, you know how it is. There's still some rough water ahead, and we're just going have to-

HK: Well, Mr. President, no one can undo the achievements, none of these packs of jackals.

RMN: Well, look, and in the end-

HK: It is the achievements that are-

RMN: -and in the end-let's not. In the end, remember, within a year people are not going to be thinking of this. They're going to be thinking of what we've been doing, Henry. So don't you worry about that.

HK: Within three months, Mr. President, no one will be able to-

RMN: Frankly, people are getting goddamn sick of it now, you know.

HK: I think in fact it's-

RMN: I've noted people-I just have a feeling that even now, you know, you pick up a paper and it's Watergate, Watergate, Dean charges this, somebody charges that, who broke into the psychiatrist's office. Wasn't that the silliest goddamn thing?

Excerpts from Nixon's Speech:

April 30, 1973

Good evening. I want to talk to you tonight from my heart on a subject of deep concern to every American.

In recent months, members of my Administration and officials of the Committee for the Re-Election of the President- including some of my closest friends and most trusted aides-have been charged with involvement in what has come to be known as the Watergate affair. These include charges of illegal activity during and preceding the 1972 Presidential election and charges that responsible officials participated in efforts to cover-up that illegal activity....

Last June 17, while I was in Florida trying to get a few days rest after my visit to Moscow, I first learned from news reports of the Watergate break-in. I was appalled at this senseless, illegal action, and I was shocked to learn that employees of the Re-Election Committee were apparently among those guilty....

Today, in one of the most difficult decisions of my Presidency, I accepted the resignations of two of my closest associates in the White House-Bob Haldeman, John Ehrlichman-two of the finest public servants it has been my privilege to know....

I looked at my own calendar this morning up at Camp David as I was working on this speech. It showed exactly 1,361 days remaining in my term. I want these to be the best days in America's history, because I love America. I deeply believe that America is the hope of the world. And I know that in the quality and wisdom of the leadership America gives lies the only hope for millions of people all over the world that they can live their lives in peace and freedom. We must be worthy of that hope, in every sense of the word. Tonight, I ask for your prayers to help me in everything that I do throughout the days of my Presidency to be worthy of their hopes and of yours.

God bless America and God bless each and every one of you.

Telephone conversation between President Richard Nixon and Bob Haldeman

April 30, 1973, 10:16 p.m.

President Nixon: Hello?

Bob Haldeman: Hi.

RMN: Hope I didn't let you down.

BH: No, sir. You got your points over, and now you've got it set right and move on. You're right where you ought to be.

RMN: Well, it's a tough thing, Bob, for you and for John and the rest, but, goddamnit, I'm never going to discuss the son-of-bitching Watergate thing again. Never, never, never, never. Don't you agree?

BH: Yes, sir. You've done it now, and you've laid out your position. You've laid out--you've taken your steps. You've put the--

RMN: Interesting thing, we haven't heard a - the only cabinet member that has called-and this is

50 minutes after the thing is over-- is Cap Weinberger, bless his soul. All the rest are waiting to see what the polls show. Goddamn strong Cabinet, isn't it?

BH: You better check and be sure, because they may--you know , we've had a --

RMN: No, they know, they know, they know who to call, they know they can get through. But in any event, I just want you to know that Cap called -and he is all the way.

BH: Good.

RMN: But let me say you're a strong man, goddamnit, and I love you.

BH: Well-

RMN: And, you know, I love John and all the rest, and, by God, keep the faith. Keep the faith. You're going to win this son of a bitch.

BH: Absolutely.

RMN: You noticed what I said about the violence and so forth on the other side? I mean there were some intricacies in this that only the sophisticated will understand.

BH: Yes sir. I want to get the text because there were some things to work on from there, that we can build on--

RMN: I thought it was good to end on what I deeply felt - the religious note - you know - God bless America. I'm sure it must have driven you up the wall, it didn't drive me up the wall, but I felt that way.

BH: No, I'm all for that, I completely agree.

RMN: I don't know whether you can call and get any reactions? And call me back, like the old style?

BH: I don't think I can

RMN: I completely agree

BH: I'm in an odd spot to try and do that-

RMN: Don't call a goddamn soul. Let me just say, getting this call from you, when I haven't heard from any cabinet officer, except Weinberger, an hour afterwards - and no staff member-

BH: When I called, the board said they were instructed not to put any calls through-

RMN: The hell with that, I told them to put all the calls through

BH: Well, that may be why you haven't gotten them - because-

RMN: Alright, I'll change it. Fine, I'll change it. But God bless you boy, God bless you, I love you, as you know, as my brother.

BH: OK

RMN: Alright boy, keep the faith.

BH: Right

Telephone conversation between President Richard Nixon and William Rogers

April 30, 1973, 10:20 p.m.

President Nixon: Hello?

William Rogers: Hi, Mr. President?

RMN: Hi, Bill.

WR: Gee, that was terrific, really superb.

RMN: Don't, don't give me that shit, you know, you know.

WR: No, no, I really mean it.

RMN: You and I have been through-it's kind of rough. You know, afterwards I shouldn't have done it, but, you know, I thanked, you know, the operators and the rest.

WR: Yeah, I know.

RMN: And all of a sudden, I sort of, sort of broke down a bit. And, I--I don't do that. You know, I'm not that kind of a man.

WR: Oh, hell, don't worry about that. I tried to get you right away, but your damn system there, it's tough to get through. I-I finally got through to Barker.

RMN: We've been trying to get through to you all day. I mean, I told Rose, goddamnit, any Cabinet officer is to get through from the minute after this speech, and the only one I've heard from is Weinberger. So I wonder what the who-what the hell's happened to everybody else.

WR: I don't know who, what the Goddamn system is. Anyway, I called, I tried to get Barker, I tried to get Bull, I finally got Barker and, and he took a message. Anyway, I thought it was superb. I don't know how you-I don't see how you could have done it any better. I think it's the best delivery I've ever seen you give. I thought the delivery-

RMN: What parts of it did you like, Bill?

WR: Oh, I liked all of it. I just thought it was great. I, ah-

RMN: You didn't mind the God bless America? That was my intuition at the last. I just sort of felt that way.

WR: No. I thought it was-I thought it was great. I suppose some of the, you know, Christ, the editorial writers may not like it, but the public is going to love it. That's what counts. And I thought the whole tone couldn't have been better. I didn't think it was-I didn't think it had any rough spots in it. I didn't think that you had any sackcloth and ashes or anything of that kind. No, I thought it was superb. I-I couldn't improve on it. I just thought it was great. Adele was watching.

RMN: What did Adele think?

WR: She thought the same thing. She thought it was critical.

RMN: She's a smart woman. You married a smarter wife than you are, you know, like I did.

WR: That's right. How'd you think it went?

RMN: I don't know anything about it, you know. I've got-you know, I've been through a hell of an experience. You know, I was just reading Adams's memoirs.

WR: Yeah.

RMN: And Adams, you know, to his credit, did come in and say, look, I'll resign.

WR: Yeah.

RMN: But Haldeman and Ehrlichman didn't, and I had to tell them they had to resign. And that was a goddamn tough son of a bitch, you know.

WR: I'll tell you this, Mr. President, you made a lot of improvements on the speech. I thought it was pretty good last night, but it was a hell of a lot better tonight. You must have done a lot of work on it today.

RMN: Worked all day. Yeah-

WR: Well I, I just think you ought to be very happy with the speech, I dunno-

RMN: Incidentally, the Cabinet thing, they were putting out Thursday, but I told Steve to move it to Wednesday. I think we ought to get it over quickly.

WR: I think it's probably better.

RMN: Is that all right with you?

WR: Right, right.

RMN: Because you're the cabinet now, boy. No, no. Oh, I'm not giving you any bullshit. You know that.

WR: incidentally, I think things look pretty good for Packard, if you still want him. I think you ought to give him a call. I talked to-

RMN: I think I'll wait til tomorrow though. I mean it's-

WR: I don't want you, I don't want you to do it tonight. I talked to Stennis I talked to Mansfield I talked to George Mahon.

RMN: What'd they say?

WR: Oh, they thought he'd be great. They thought he'd be great--

RMN: Bill, waive the-

WR: We'll figure out something about that.

RMN: Good of you to call, Bill. You've been a-

WR: Well, Mr. President, that was a great speech. Get some sleep now.

RMN: Great.

Billy Graham Comforts Nixon

April 30, 1973

President Nixon: ...I had to tell Haldeman and Ehrlichman to resign, which they wouldn't do voluntarily, and that was tough.

Billy Graham: Well, your sincerity, your humility, your asking for prayer, all of that had a tremendous impact.

RMN: Do you really think so, Billy?

BG: I really-I'm telling you the truth, and I'm not trying to just encourage you. I know you get all that. But I really mean it.

RMN: Well, that's good of you, Billy. You've been a friend...

Telephone conversation between President Richard Nixon and Elliot Richardson
April 30, 1973, 10:34 p.m.

[Listen](#)

President Nixon: Hello?

Elliot Richardson: Hello, Mr. President.

RMN: Hi Elliot

ER: Thank you for calling back.

RMN: No, I tried to reach you about a half hour ago but the damn lines were so busy.

ER: Really? I don't know what that was. Well, I was very-I thought that was really great.

RMN: Well, you're very kind to say that.

ER: In a real sense your finest hour.

RMN: I tried to call you, actually-I mean, you know, I just-just learned, you know, about this, you know because, you know, the lines have been jammed, and I just learned about five minutes ago from Steve Bull that you had called. And I said, for Christ sakes, why don't you put it through? Then he said, well, we had other calls on, you know, and I was on the phone. Good God, my God, Billy Graham and eighteen other people, but I just wanted you to know I hadn't cut you off because of that.

ER: Well-

RMN: Because you can always get through. I want you to know, you can always get through, believe me.

ER: Well, I thank you, Mr. President. And I was very moved and touched by what you said about me and I-

RMN: Oh, well.

ER: And I can assure you that-well, you know what I mean.

RMN: I know.

ER: I won't let you down.

RMN: Do your job, boy, and it may take you all the way.

ER: You know, it so happened that I was having a party here tonight for the military assistants who have been with [Deputy Defense Secretary] Bill Clements and me and who were just leaving for new jobs. And so all the [Joint] Chiefs were here.

RMN: Right.

ER: And we all watched and listened to you together.

RMN: What did they think?

ER: I've never-I don't think I've never ever been with a group of people who were more moved by an occasion like this.

RMN: Really? Really?

ER: And it was a great thing, really, for all of us.

RMN: Well, you know I meant it, you know. As you know Elliot it came from the heart because you were up there with me and you know how rugged this was, but had to be done.

ER: We, we could see that it was very, very-

RMN: Well, you're the man, you're my man and by God we back you up all to the hilt, do you understand that?

ER: I do, I do.

RMN: All right, Elliot.

ER: And I won't let you down Mr. President.

RMN: Oh, I know that. I know that. That's why I named you. [Laughter]

ER: Well I gotta say that uh, I [pause]

RMN: Go ahead.

ER: I have the feeling that I think I can do it right. I really do.

RMN: Of course you can. Of course you can. Elliot, the one thing they're going to be hitting you on is about the special prosecutor.

ER: Yeah.

RMN: The point is, I'm not sure you should have one. I'm not sure but what you should say you assume the responsibility for the prosecution and maybe bring that nice fellow [first name unknown] Hastings or whatever his name is, say he's-but whatever you want. Good God, if you want, you know, to exhume [one Chief Justice] Charles Evans Hughes, do it, you know. I don't mind. [Laughter]

ER: Okay. Well, I'm thinking about it, and I met with Henry Petersen this afternoon.

RMN: Right.

ER: And I talked with him about it, and I'll think about it some more.

RMN: Do what you want, and I'll back you to the hilt. I don't give a damn what you do, I am for you. Do you understand? Get to the bottom of this sonofabitch.

ER: I do.

RMN: All right, Elliot.

ER: Thank you, sir.

RMN: Thank you for calling and give my best to your lovely wife.

ER: I will. Thanks.

Nixon Comiserates with Aide Colson

April 30, 1973

President Nixon: ...Incidentally, on this-you know, all this business about, you know, the Plumbers operation, good God, that's totally justified, isn't it?

Charles Colson: Yes, sir.

RMN: Or is it?

CC: Well, I don't think there's any doubt about it. I don't intend to talk about it. They-I don't think they can make me, because that's, at least what I know about it, it's a national security operation, and Ehrlichman talked to me about that some time ago, and that was something that I wouldn't, I wouldn't discuss. I wouldn't have any reason to discuss it.

RMN: Right. You just say-but you say, "Look, we were protecting the security of this country."

CC: That's right.

RMN: Right, OK Chuck.

CC: Hell if they want to-well, God bless you, Mr. President.

RMN: Well, God bless you and keep your faith, boy.

CC: Mine's with you, Sir.

RMN: Fine.

CC: And the country's is, Mr. President.